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September 4, 2001

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The Honorable Spencer Abraham, Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

RE: Request for Extension of Comment Period on the Yucca Mountain Preliminary Site Suitability Evaluation and for a Site Recommendation Consideration Hearing in Inyo County.

Dear Secretary Abraham,

On behalf of Inyo County and concerned agencies and individuals of the State of California, we are requesting a 90-day extension of the comment period for the recently released "Yucca Mountain Preliminary Site Suitability Evaluation". We are further requesting that the Department of Energy conduct a Site Recommendation Consideration Hearing at Furnace Creek, in Death Valley National Park, at a date subsequent to September 18, 2001, and that the Secretary of Energy be present at said hearing to gain firsthand knowledge of the views and concerns of Inyo County and its residents. As the ultimate resting place of radioactive materials anticipated (by DOE's current range of repository designs) to escape from the proposed Yucca Mountain Repository, *Inyo County is distinguished by its status as the most seriously impacted of all jurisdictions potentially affected by the development, operation and closure of the Yucca Mountain facility.*

We were notified August 21, 2001 of DOE's decision to limit public hearings on the Preliminary Site Suitability Evaluation (PSSE) to three locations in Nevada and to establish a September 20, 2001 deadline for public comment on the PSSE. Inyo County - and more specifically - Death Valley National Park, is recognized to be the ultimate destination of those radioactive materials expected by DOE to escape the repository. Our status as a directly impacted County and our proximity to the Yucca Mountain Site certainly place us within the "vicinity" of Yucca Mountain and therefore eligible for a public hearing as specified by the Nuclear Waste Policy Act. The offer of providing in-County teleconferencing of the September 12, 2001 public hearing at Amargosa Valley is neither adequate to our needs nor respectful of our status with respect to the importance of the Site Suitability Evaluation process.

Our staff is currently reviewing the large body of documentation that has been released since the opening of the Science and Engineering Report comment period on May 4, 2001. The recent release of extensive supplementary analyses and the PSSE combine with short notice on the establishment of the September 20 comment deadline to create an unreasonable burden on our County's analytical resources. The September 20 deadline also unduly restricts the Board of Supervisor's opportunities to publicly discuss and adopt a response to the PSSE recommendation evaluation, in fact limiting the Board's options to making a decision at a single meeting (September 18, 2001). Due to this limitation, we are requesting that our hearing take place after September 18th in order to provide us with an opportunity to present our findings in the context of a public hearing.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Andrew Remus, Project Coordinator, Inyo County Yucca Mountain Assessment Office at (760) 878-0447.

Very truly yours,



Linda Arcularius, Vice-Chair
Inyo County Board of Supervisors
Inyo County, California

cc: Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Barbara Boxer
Congressman Jerry Lewis
Governor Gray Davis
Lake Barrett, Acting Director, OCRWM
J.T. Reynolds, Superintendent, Death Valley National Park
Affected Units of Local Government